

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

By the present amendment:

- Claim 1, 27 and 29 are currently amended;
- Claims 26 and 30-32 are cancelled without prejudice or disclaimer;
- Claim 6 is previously amended; and
- Claims 2-5, 7-25 and 28 are original.

Claims Rejections – 35 USC § 102

The examiner has rejected claims 1 and 30-32 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Yamane (US 6,005,312); claims 1 and 30-32 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Couture *et al.* (US 5,438,228); claims 1 and 30-32 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Elris *et al.* (US 4,814,651); and claims 1-5 and 28-32 under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Nakano (US 6,114,784).

Claim 1 has been amended to include the subject matter of claim 26 to thereby place this claim in condition for allowance. Claims 2-5 and 28 are directly or indirectly dependent onto claim 1 and are therefore allowable.

Claim 29 has been amended to depend onto claim 6 to thereby place this claim in condition for allowance.

To expedite the allowance of the present application, claims 26 and 30-32 have been deleted without prejudice or disclaimer.

Allowable Subject Matter

In the Office action, the Examiner states that claims 6 to 25 are allowed and that claims 26 and 27 are objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim.

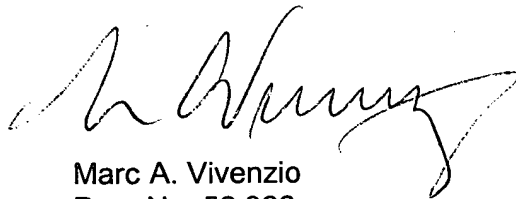
The subject matter of claim 26 has been inserted in claim 1 to thereby place this claim in condition for allowance. The dependency of claim 27 has been amended.

Applicant respectfully requests that a timely Notice of Allowance be issued in this case.

Conclusion

For at least the foregoing reasons, Applicants respectfully submit that the present application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a timely notification of allowance is courteously requested. If, for any reason, the Examiner is inclined to further reject any of the claims, Applicants requests that counsel be contacted to resolve any remaining issues. Reconsideration is requested and favorable action is solicited.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marc A. Vivenzio', is written over a light gray grid background.

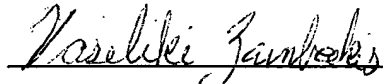
Marc A. Vivenzio
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Dated: May 9, 2005

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CERTIFICATE OF MAILING BY FIRST CLASS MAIL (37 CFR 1.8)

I hereby certify that this Amendment and Response and any paper or document referred to therein as being attached or enclosed is being deposited with the U.S. Postal Service with sufficient postage as First Class Mail in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop AF, Commissioner for Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on May 9, 2005.



Vasiliki Zambakis